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AMEMB ADDIS PLEASE PASS TO USAU

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SECURING PERMANENT OBSERVER STATUS FOR CANADA AND
YEMEN IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP ON SOMALIA

11. (U) This is an action request, please see paragraph 2.

OBJECTIVES

12. (SBU) Posts are asked to approach host governments and regional organizations to pursue the following objective:

-- Seek agreement for Canada and Yemen to be granted Permanent Observer status in the International Contact Group on Somalia (ICG) prior to the next meeting, currently scheduled for September 10 or 11 in Rome.

13. (SBU) For Nairobi, please seek agreement from the Government of Kenya on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). For Cairo, please seek agreement from the Arab League.

14. (U) For additional information and background regarding U.S. support for Canadian and Yemeni participation as a permanent observer to the ICG, please see paragraphs 8-10.

BACKGROUND

15. (SBU) The International Contact Group on Somalia (ICG) was established in June 2006 for members to share views on the current situation and future prospects in Somalia, engage with the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) on progress in Somalia, and agree to a set of key actions for ICG partners to deliver or promote which are designed to help stabilize Somalia and advance the political process and transitional period. The ICG is committed to help bring about a safe and stable environment for the political transition and reconciliation process. The United States is a founding member (with Norway) of the ICG and sees it as a key mechanism to ensure coordinated efforts to advance the political process and stabilize the security situation in Somalia.

16. (U) Current member states in the ICG are the United States, the European Union (Presidency and Commission), Italy, Kenya, Norway, Sweden, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom. The African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, represented by the Government of Kenya), League of Arab States, and the United Nations participate as

permanent observers in the ICG. Canada recently participated as an observer at the ICG meeting on June 5-6, 2007 in London, while Yemen has participated as an observer since February. Both Canada and Yemen have expressed a strong interest in becoming a permanent member of the ICG.

¶7. (SBU) In May, the Canadian Foreign Minister wrote to Secretary Rice requesting U.S. support for Canada's

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membership in the ICG. Due to our strong bilateral partnership, Secretary Rice has personally endorsed Canadian membership in the ICG. The ICG discussed the possibility of admitting new members at the London meeting in June. While the U.S. was prepared to open the membership to allow Canada, Yemen, and other interested parties to join, the UK surprised most members of the ICG by insisting that the group not admit any new members in order to prevent compromising its effectiveness with additional members. However, we believe that Canada and Yemen are uniquely placed to make significant contributions to the ICG and help advance ICG objectives.

IF ASKED) JUSTIFICATION FOR PERMANENT OBSERVERSHIP

¶8. (SBU) CANADA: Canada was a positive and constructive participant in the London ICG meeting in June and recently joined the International Advisory Committee (IAC) for the National Reconciliation Congress based in Nairobi, Kenya, and is an active member of the Somalia Donor Group. Since April 2005, Canada has provided approximately \$23.5 million to the UN, Red Cross and Canadian NGOs in support of humanitarian assistance initiatives in Somalia and the region, responding to drought, flooding and increased insecurity due to conflict. This includes Somalia assistance in response to the 2007 appeals from humanitarian partner organizations. Canada has also increased its support for small-scale, local, development-oriented projects for Somalia and is exploring funding for counterterrorism capacity-building initiatives.

¶9. (SBU) Canada also has important diplomatic ties to the region, including strong bilateral relations with Kenya and Ethiopia. Canada's contributions to the stabilization and peace processes in the region, including Sudan and Uganda, provide Canada with valuable experience and insight that could be applied to the situation in Somalia. Canada also has strong linkages to its Somali diaspora community, estimated at up to 200,000. Many Somali-Canadians maintain strong links to Somalia and occupy positions in the TFIs or are prominent members of the business community, media representatives, or civil society in Somalia. Canada is also seen as neutral by all regional players and thus could play an important role in facilitating dialogue and advancing ICG initiatives.

¶10. (SBU) YEMEN: Located directly across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia, Yemen has strong economic, political, and cultural ties to Somalia, as well as strong bilateral ties with other countries in the Horn of Africa sub-region, including Djibouti and Ethiopia. In addition to several thousand Somali refugees, Yemen is host to a large Somali diaspora population, many of whom have business ties to Somalia. Due to its strong bilateral relationship with the TFIs and its status as a member of the League of Arab States, Yemen is uniquely placed to help mediate between Somali factions, as evinced by Yemen's successful mediation between Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf and former Speaker of Parliament Shariff Hassan Sheikh Adan in January 2006. Yemen is an active member of the IAC based in Nairobi and has constructively participated as an observer in previous ICG meetings, including Tanzania in February, Cairo in April, and London in June. Yemen's unique perspective and ability to engage with a wide range of Somali interlocutors would help facilitate dialogue and advance ICG initiatives.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶11. (U) Please report results of this effort via front-channel cable to AF/E Nole Garey by August 31. Please include Embassy Nairobi as info addressee.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶12. (U) Please contact AF/E Nole Garey at (202) 647-8284 or via e-mail for any further background information or argumentation to meet our objectives. For USAU, John Kelley has cleared this cable.

RICE